

Supply

training for women. I would suggest that, at Regina, our Government did set forth a policy, a labour market development strategy was unveiled and it included training programs targeted to women. The new training programs feature special measures and objectives for women, and we are preparing a professional program designed for women who return to the labour market. Targets have been set for the participation of women in programs geared to labour shortages. That is the only remark I wanted to direct to my colleague, just so she would realize that the Government is very concerned about and actively dealing with training for women.

[English]

Ms. Jewett: Mr. Speaker, I was just pointing out that it falls so short of what is needed that it is merely a drop in the bucket. Women will still be extremely unequal when it comes to securing job training and retraining spaces.

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Landry (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on the status of women. I am almost tempted to thank my colleague from New Westminster-Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett) for giving the Government an opportunity to show to the House and to all Canadian men and women the active steps we have taken since September 4.

Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State (Mr. McLean) and Minister responsible for the status of women is now with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women which, as my colleague explained, brings together 300 different associations representing about three million women. Mr. Speaker, it shows that our Government and the Minister do care about women's interests and that consultation remains a priority.

Mr. Speaker, the Government acknowledges that there is more than ample proof that concrete measures must be taken to eradicate the social and economic disparities suffered by Canadian women. A number of recent studies have shed light on the injustices they suffer in practically all sectors of society. Indeed, in a report made public recently concerning a statistical picture of women in Canada, Statistics Canada came up with dismaying figures on the status of Canadian women since 1970. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I should like to quote some of those findings:

In annual terms, female university graduates earn only \$1,600 more than men with secondary education and only \$4,000 more than men with less than Grade 9 education. More families than ever depend on a woman's income to make ends meet. Yet women on the labour market continue to be almost exclusively responsible for looking after the children and keeping house. In 1981, roughly 10 per cent of all Canadian households were headed by women, but their average income was 50 per cent lower than those headed by men. Close to half the families whose breadwinner is a woman live below the poverty line.

The report confirms once again that most working women hold low-paid jobs in service industries and office work and that the majority of them work part time, unlike men who earn their living in manufacturing industries and the secondary sector where employment growth is strongest. As a country, we

can no longer afford to live in a society where half of the population contributes only part of its potential. We must compensate for all these years during which women were underemployed by embarking on a strategy of women capability development.

• (1140)

Mr. Speaker, that is a responsibility which the federal government assumes very seriously, as it clearly indicated in its Speech from the Throne of last November. As a matter of fact, we have taken concrete measures in this respect. We feel, however, that we could not bring about a profound change within our society without the full cooperation of all our economic partners. With this objective in mind, the government has already started with the provinces and the private sector a series of consultations aimed at initiating the economic recovery which our country needs so badly and reviving the confidence of all Canadians in our system of government.

One of the major objectives of these consultations is to make sure that the recovery benefits all. To this end, we have seen to it that women concerns are fully integrated in the consultative process. As a matter of fact, these concerns were a major item on the agenda of the First Ministers' Conference which was held last February in Regina. A federal-provincial-territorial meeting of the ministers responsible for the status of women had taken place a little earlier to prepare the First Ministers' Conference and determine the issues to be addressed in Regina. The Prime Minister could not have made his stand clearer when he stated in Regina that equity was part and parcel of the economic recovery. I might add that giving women their fair share is not only a matter of justice, but also of economic efficiency.

The federal government did not fail either to put the issues of concern to women on the agenda of the National Economic Conference which took place recently in Ottawa. We were anxious to have women participate as full partners in these important economic discussions with business, union and government representatives. We believe that the integration of women issues to every aspect of policy development is a valuable approach which is already being implemented throughout the government.

I should like to provide a few examples of the way in which this consultation and integration process has brought about legislative changes favourable to women since this government assumed power. Under recently proposed amendments to the Old Age Security Act, all needy widows and widowers who meet the eligibility requirements will be entitled to the spouse's allowance no matter how old their spouses were when they died. Some 85,000 widows and widowers, most of them women, will benefit from this legislation. Under proposed amendments to the Indian Act, discrimination based on sex will be banned from now on. Until now, an Indian woman who married a non-Indian man would lose her status as an Indian